



Be inspired

Creative inspiration comes from the most unexpected places. Sometimes where you expect it the least. This was my experience at a high school graduation that I recently attended. The programme had all the usual format of these symbolic events: a warm glow, certificates, the band, photos, the Principal’s speech and an unknown guess speaker.

His name was Richard Moore. I’d never heard of him. However, the first thing that struck me as he approached the stage, supported by a helper, was that he was blind. He started his introduction with a touching revelation: “I wasn’t born blind”. At 10 years old, in his home town of Derry, Northern Ireland, he was struck by a rubber bullet fired by a British soldier. Tragedy was the word he used to describe his parent’s plight and their sorrow.

The bullet hit the bridge of his nose which led to a deterioration in his sight and, ultimately, complete blindness. Richard’s response to this tragedy was contrary. He didn’t feel sorry for himself and didn’t express bitterness

towards his attacker. Quite the contrary, he and the soldier subsequently met and it provided a profound resolution for them both. By his early 20s, Moore had set up his own businesses including a hotel among other interests. His motto has always been: focus on your abilities rather than your disabilities. He was moved by the experience of other children caught up in waging violence between communities and state. In 1996 he established a charity called Children in Crossfire. The charity runs programmes across the world to help children who were just like himself including countries such as Ethiopia, Tanzania and the Gambia.

There are a number of leadership lessons that we can take from Richard’s extraordinary story and from those of the many other unknown heroes and heroines like him.

First, his forgiveness of the soldier has been a critical part of his journey. This has been a source of inspiration for many of his friends. As one put it: “Not once did he show any bitterness”. The dark nights of the soul can be like a test. Lessons of experience, when things go wrong are often the “crucibles” of leadership.

Second, focus on the positive. There is considerable evidence that suggests that how we perceive and frame a situation will determine how we respond to

it. How often do we complain about problems rather than seeing opportunities?

Thirdly, he moved his compassion into action. As the Dalai Lama says: it is not enough to be compassionate. You must also act.

Finally, it’s important to articulate a clear vision. I was struck by one of his closing statements. He summed it up thus: “I may not have eyes but it doesn’t stop me from having a vision”. So it begs the question for us all: What is your vision, can you see the positives in life and how do you turn compassion into action – for family, for business, for the community?

I was left truly inspired.

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